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IAF BEGINS EVACUATION

India's efforts to evacuate citizens from Ukraine gathered pace on Wednesday with IAF joining Operation Ganga

C-17S TO REACH TODAY

Four C-17 aircraft of the Indian Air Force with close to 800 evacuees on board will land in New Delhi on Thursday, sources said. India has been evacuating its citizens through special flights from Romania, Hungary and Poland as the Ukrainian airspace has been shut

INDIGO TO SEND 8 FLIGHTS

IndiGo said it will send eight flights to Hungary, Poland and Romania on Thursday to evacuate stranded Indians. "Two flights each will be operated via Istanbul, from Delhi to Budapest and Rzeszow (Poland); and two flights each to Bucharest (Romania) and Suceava (Romania)

MORE FIRMS EXIT RUSSIA

Apple, Disney, Ford and Boeing joined other international majors in dialing down or suspending operation in Russia. Apples said it will halt the sale of its products in Russia. Boeing said it has already suspended operations in Moscow

Smoke rises after the Russian attack on a TV tower in Kyiv | PTI

17,000

INDIANS HAVE LEFT UKRAINE, ACCORDING TO MEA

UNGA VOTES TO CONDEMN RUSSIA

The UN General Assembly on Wednesday adopted a resolution strongly condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It was adopted with 141 votes in favour with India abstaining. It was India's fourth abstention in less than a week in the world body

A secure corridor to evacuate stranded students; Modi dials Putin to ensure the safety of citizens

Safe passage for Indians: Russia

PM CHAIRS FIFTH HIGH-LEVEL MEET

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting on Wednesday night on the Ukraine crisis, as India is ramping up efforts to evacuate its citizens stranded in that country. Union ministers S Jaishankar, Piyush Goyal besides senior officials attended the meeting, the fourth in the past 24 hours and the fifth since Sunday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

A day after an Indian student was killed during Russia's attack on Ukraine's second largest city of Kharkiv, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Russian President Vladimir Putin late on Wednesday night. "The leaders reviewed the situation in Ukraine, especially in the city of Kharkiv where many Indian students are stuck. They discussed the safe evacuation of the Indian nationals from the conflict areas," read a government release.

Earlier in the day, Russian ambassador Denis Alipov told media persons that Moscow will ensure the safety of Indian citizens stranded in Ukraine. "Russia will do everything it possibly can to ensure the safety of Indian citizens in the areas of intense conflict," he said. The Russian ambassador said a "humanitarian corridor" will be created for the safe passage of stranded Indians to a Russian territory, from where they can travel to India.

The diplomat added that his country will inquire into the unfortunate death of 21-year-old Naveen Shekarappa Gyanagoudar, a fourth-year student at the Kharkiv National Medical University.

Russia's assurance also comes a day after foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla summoned Alipov and deputy chief of mission Roman Babushkin over the death of the student.

Modi had dialled Putin last week as well, to express India's concerns about the safety of its citizens in Ukraine.

On Wednesday, speaking at an election rally in Uttar Pradesh, Modi said that his government will leave no stone unturned for the safe return of all Indians.

Meanwhile, the Indian embassy in Ukraine asked all Indians stranded in Kharkiv to leave the conflict zone immediately. "They must leave Kharkiv immediately in light of the deteriorating situation. They should proceed to Pisochyn, Babai and Bezlyudivka as soon as possible for their safety," the embassy said in an emergency advisory.

Underlining the gravity of the situation, the Indian mission issued another advisory a few hours later, urging the students to proceed immediately so that they are able to reach the settlements by 6 pm (Ukraine time) by whatever means available, advising them to walk if they can't get any vehicles. P5, 9, 12

INDIAN STUDENT DIES OF STROKE IN UKRAINE

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

A 22-year-old medical student from Punjab died in Ukraine on Wednesday after suffering a stroke a month ago, becoming the second Indian to lose life in Ukraine since the start of the conflict.

Chandan Jindal was studying at Vinnytsia National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia, 260 kilometres south of the capital city Kyiv. His death comes a day after an Indian student was killed in the Russian shelling of eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv.

Sources close to his family in Punjab's Barnala district said Chandan had suffered an ischemic stroke and was admitted to a hospital in Vinnytsia on February 3. Four days later, his father and uncle flew to Ukraine to take care of him. While his uncle returned on Tuesday, his father Shisan Kumar Jindal is still with him in Vinnytsia.

NAVEEN'S BODY IDENTIFIED, SAYS FOREIGN SECRETARY

The body of Naveen Shekarappa Gyanagoudar, who was killed in intense shelling in Kharkiv on Tuesday, was identified and taken to a morgue in the university, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Tuesday night

Paratroopers land in Kharkiv, more Ukrainian cities come under attack

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

RUSSIA's invasion of Ukraine entered a critical phase on Wednesday with airborne troops landing in Kharkiv and Moscow stepping up its aerial attack on key Ukrainian cities, including capital Kyiv.

Authorities in Kharkiv said Russian paratroopers attacked a hospital and reports emerged of heavy street battles. According to Ukrainian officials, at least 2,000 civilians have died since the conflict started.

On Wednesday, Russia claimed its forces have captured a strategic Black Sea port city of Kherson though it was disputed by Ukrainian authorities. More Ukrainian cities, including those west and south of Kyiv came under Russian attack as the invasion entered its seventh day on Wednesday with reports saying many of the targets destroyed were in civilian areas.

Kyiv braced for more air strikes over Wednesday night with a large column of forces bearing down on the city. Its mayor Vitali Klitschko said "the enemy is drawing up forces closer to the capital". "Kyiv is holding and will hold. We are going to fight," the former champion boxer added.

Democracies are rising to the moment, and the world is choosing the side of peace and security - Joe Biden

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin of trying to erase his country.

Meanwhile, in his first State of the Union address on Tuesday night, US President Joe Biden called Putin a 'dictator' and warned of more sanctions to cripple Russia's economy.

"A Russian dictator, invading a foreign country, has costs around the world," Biden said. He said Putin must be made to pay the price for his aggression. "Throughout our history we've learned this lesson ' when dictators do not pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos. They keep moving. And, the costs and threats to America and the world keep rising," he said.

WILL BRING STUDENT'S BODY BACK SOON: CM

G SUBHASH CHANDRA & ARUNKUMAR HURALIMATH
@ Chalageri (Haveri dt), Hubballi, Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday said they have received a photograph of Naveen Gyana Goudar's body and it will be sent to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which is making efforts to bring the mortal remains back to India at the earliest.

Naveen was killed in shelling by Russian forces in Kharkiv in Ukraine on Tuesday. Bommai said it is the government's priority to bring Naveen's body back to his village Chalageri in Haveri district.

However, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, who visited Naveen's family at Chalageri, said it is difficult to bring the body back and to evacuate stranded Indians from Ukraine as the situation in Kharkiv, where the medical student was killed, and Kyiv, the capital city, is bad because of heightened aggression by Russia. P6

Only a temporary or permanent ceasefire can help in evacuating Indians and bringing back Naveen's body

Pralhad Joshi, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister

All Covid curbs lifted in K'taka

CHETANA BELAGERE
@ Bengaluru

ALL Covid restrictions have been lifted in the state and large public congregations and weddings too are allowed now.

Members of the Covid Technical Advisory Committee held a meeting on Sunday, the day before the order passed by the government enforcing Covid restrictions ended and recommended to the government that all curbs can go.

"TAC has given the green signal to lift restrictions. But strict Covid-appropriate behaviour (CAB), like compulsory wearing of face masks, screening for symptomatic persons, physical distancing especially in closed spaces, provision for hand sanitizer, etc, should continue. With the government's order lapsing on February 28 and no fresh orders, it means all the restrictions have been lifted," confirmed D Randeep, Commissioner, Department of Health and Family Welfare. P3

EXPRESS READ

BharatPe lashes out at Ashneer Grover

Bengaluru: A day after Ashneer Grover wrote a mail of his resignation, and how he has been vilified by investors, BharatPe on Wednesday lashed out at him for "hurling baseless allegations and threats." The company accused the Grover family of extensive misappropriation of funds. P13

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